1102-250 Lisgar St.,
Ottawa. K2P 0C9

Minister and congregation,
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25 June 1993

Dear Friends,

Several thousand Canadians are diagnosed as intermittently disabled by pollution. We have one or more problems arising from exposure to various environmental agents.

We were subjects of two provincial studies in Ontario, conducted by George Thomson (who is currently doing the Social Assistance review for Community and Social Services), and Dr. Barry Zimmerman (who is with the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto).

I have been approaching the federal government since leaving work as a reporter with CBC in the summer of 1984. It has been a difficult time. Even after four years experience with community development workers, and five years tracking social issues for CBC TV News, it was impossible to find a co-operative route in approaching Health and Welfare. As a result, I have been forced into an adversarial stance with respect to the department.

As I testified at the Standing Committee on Health and Welfare, our biggest problem has arisen from public misconceptions which were actually fostered by the department. Health and Welfare (and some provincial ministries of health) repeatedly suggested we were imagining our problems due to stress.

As a result of these suggestions, people suffered a general loss of credibility in their communities. People disabled by pollution have lost their families, their jobs, and their professional reputations. People were denied 'reasonable accomodation' in the workplace and didn't receive deserved disability pensions. Some died, some by suicide.

Walter Nelson, Ray Matyshyn, Flora MacDonald, Elmer MacKay, Benoit Bouchard, James Kelleher, Joe Clark, Tom Hockin, Paul Dick, Robert de Cotret, Pierre Cadieux, Andre Bissonette, John Crosbie, Murael Mosse, Pat Carney, Michael Wilson, David Milgour, Jay Stackhouse, Alan Redway, John Bosley, John Reimer, David Daubney, Sheila Copps, Margaret Mitchell, and Michael Cassidy have all approached Mr. Epp on the concern.

The Hon Jake Epp has repeatedly said he is sympathetic to our concerns, but has failed to address those arising from the actions of his department, the effects of which continue.

More recently, some have received help from various cabinet ministers of the current Ontario and federal governments. Now that the problem is recognized the government should act to help people whose lives have been devastated by its previous (and, in some dark corners, ongoing) statements.

There are many problems in the world, and you have been active in trying to help people find humane ways of coping with them together. Unless we can convince governments to have a basic level of respect for human dignity and citizens' concerns, there will be an increasing number of victims.

I have fought this particular battle alone, (with support from individuals affected), as the self-help groups are comprised mainly of people more sick than myself, who feel unable to fight. It has cost me a few years salary, and about twenty thousand dollars in direct costs, mostly for postage and long distance charges.

It is an unfortunate sign for all of us, but my adversarial tactics (and co-operative ones where possible) have brought much more success than that achieved through the kinds of actions we were taught in our high school civics classes. Mr. Epp has refused to deal with the (meek) registered charitable groups.

Accusatorial news releases brought some ministers on board. As an act of civil disobedience I refused to fill out my census, and that brought a few cabinet ministers on board. I invented the "FRESH AIR Brick", and media interest in that brought the concern to more than 2.5 million Canadians. (Go ye therefore and work; for no straw shall be given you, yet ye shall deliver the tale of Bricks.)

In all, I single-handedly achieved the support of fifteen cabinet ministers, both opposition parties, and the majority leader in the Senate. I have never received benefits for myself, (although I am intermittently disabled by pollution), but I have been successful in obtaining money for others.

Stewart McInnes' office made money available under the Residential Rehabilitation program to people who needed modifications to their houses, usually replacing petrochemical with electric heating. Michel Cote offered to open up discussions on food labelling, while Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Roch LaSalle asked for submissions on office building sickness. Monique Vezina alled us to the Statistics Canada Post Censal survey of the disabled. Treasury Board has promised reasonable accommodation for federal employees affected, including special air cleaners in their offices. Environment Canada has promised "horizontal policy influence" directed at other departments. David Crombie invited us to take advantage of Disabled Persons Participation funding.

The Hon Bernard Valcourt suggested Federal Business Development funding to finance a factory to produce "FRESH AIR Bricks".

An aide to the Minister of Revenue Canada, after hearing about the concern because I boycotted my taxes, wrote: "I sympathize. Your crusade is long and arduous. But please Mr. Brown, I came not to be an inquisitor." I was not investigated for refusing to pay taxes. (Naturally they owe me a small sum, but they don't know that.)

I managed to convince Tom McMillan and David Crombie to sponsor a conference of people affected, the first federal money to go to the national self-help organisation of people affected. Now that there have been some successes, the self-help groups are starting to speak out for themselves.

Although the government has done all kinds of things, so far we have been unsuccessful in getting Health and Welfare to address the first and primary concern, and the one they are most responsible for. The department should act to turn around public misconceptions it fostered for the past quarter century. Those attitudes are still out there hurting people.

Aside from expressing some disillusionment in how the current government views it's democratic responsibilities, responding to it's own agenda but not that of the citizens it is responsible to, I am writing with a specific appeal.

Although I have had many freelance contracts over the past four years, the frustrations and work involved in dealing with an unresponsive government have interfered with my abilities to maintain an income, by taking both time and emotional energies. While looking forward to good economic prospects in the long term, I am currently in a fairly desperate situation. I owe two thousand dollars (immediately payable), and five thousand which must be paid over the next ten months.

I am unable to approach the environmentally sensitive for money, because they simply don't have it. Developing contacts in the business world has been difficult while distracted by this concern, although, so far, my bank manager still smiles when he sees me.

Most people are feeling a financial pinch these days, and most people who give money for various "good works" are having to choose carefully. Nonetheless I make this special appeal for help, principally so I might continue to press the issue (especially now that we have an expressed commitment from several federal politicians).

I would appreciate any help you or any organisations you're associated with could give me. I am not a "charitable" organisation; I believe charity, in truth, involves social justice.

I hope you can help the above record of accomplishment continue.

Thank you,

Chris Brown
(613) 237 0321

P.S. Any amount would be appreciated, of course, but for the immediate crisis I'm trying to find twenty people or groups who would kick in a hundred dollars each.